



Department of Justice

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PROJECT SAFE CHILDHOOD: A PRIORITY IN PROTECTING HOOSIER CHILDREN

INDIANAPOLIS - The core mission of Project Safe Childhood (PSC) is to reduce the sexual exploitation of children by coordinating the resources of local, state and federal law enforcement, training PSC partners, and raising public awareness of both the incidence of child exploitation crimes, as well as how to begin to prevent them. The PSC initiative is also designed to drive prosecutions of those individuals who would exploit children. The United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Indiana has long been a national leader in PSC, and is continuing to lead the way in meeting the PSC mission.

I. A powerful partnership with local, state and federal law enforcement

The success of the PSC initiative in the Southern District of Indiana (SDIN PSC) is primarily driven by the seamless partnership between federal law enforcement and a robust and active Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (ICAC). The Indiana ICAC is administered by the Indiana State Police, which both investigates crimes against children and is tasked with disbursing federal funding to approximately 40 local law enforcement agencies affiliated with the ICAC task force, 26 of which are in the Southern District of Indiana. Virtually all federal search warrants involving child exploitation executed within the Southern District of Indiana by federal agencies include active participation by ICAC partners, and ICAC affiliated agencies frequently bring investigations to the attention of federal authorities. In fact, several of the more high profile cases in recent years began as case referrals by ICAC affiliates, and continued as joint investigations.

The close relationship between the SDIN PSC and its federal, state and local partners has also led to the development of innovative investigative techniques. The combination of ever-changing Internet and digital technology along with the threat to children demands a fast, flexible, informed and adaptive approach to identifying offenders and rescuing children from abuse. In 2000, the problem was recognized that the examination of computer and digital evidence was not being accomplished until long after its seizure, which is still the norm in many places around the country. This was resulting in dangerous offenders being left out in the community and children

continuing to be at risk for abuse. In response, SDIN PSC developed the Fast Computer Forensics Field Triage Process Model with the Indiana State Police and U.S. Department of Homeland Security Investigations (formerly ICE), with assistance from Purdue University. The essence of the model is that computer and digital evidence is "triaged" at the scene of a search, gaining investigators the ability to get a snapshot of the kind of offender they are facing, and often also identifying an offender's victimization of children. The Indiana ICAC and its affiliate agencies, as well as several federal law enforcement partners, made a full roll out of this model, which has resulted in dozens of Indiana children being rescued from sexual abuse on law enforcement's first contact with the offender. The process model has become the model for a growing number of locations that are employing the technique, with similar results.

The powerful local, state and federal partnership here in the Southern District of Indiana has also operated as a significant force multiplier that has allowed SDIN PSC to seek out the worst of the worst offenders inside Indiana, as well as those outside of Indiana who distribute child pornography into the Southern District of Indiana. Recent trends suggest that the most dangerous offenders are those who congregate together on the Internet, and reinforce one another's sexual fantasies involving children, leading to the exploitation of minors through child pornography and, often, child molestation of minors available to the offenders. In order to address this threat, SDIN PSC has sought out such groups and targeted them for aggressive prosecution. The SDIN PSC is at the forefront of these kinds of prosecutions, and is continually working to identify new child pornography groups. A strong partnership with the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS) with the Department of Justice has been a powerful help in this regard, and the combination of that partnership with the existing resources in the Southern District of Indiana has resulted in a high level of expertise being developed by our local, state and federal law enforcement partners.

In fact, the SDIN PSC and our law enforcement partners have become among the leading experts in investigating Internet child exploitation crimes. We routinely take full advantage of cutting edge investigative tools, and capture sophisticated offenders who had previously been successful in avoiding law enforcement. This expertise is an exceptional service to Hoosiers, as we have gained the ability to track down and capture offenders who victimize Indiana children wherever they reside. There is no safe quarter from SDIN PSC.

By staying on the cutting edge of offender behavior, SDIN PSC frequently prosecutes emerging crimes. The United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Indiana is at the forefront of "sextortion" prosecutions, a relatively new form of child exploitation whereby offenders are melding cyberbullying with sexting, and coercing children to self-produce child pornography. The investigation and prosecution of such offenders by the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Indiana has led to cutting off the exploitation of numerous children in just this form of crime alone.

The SDIN PSC team has also reached beyond the Internet in its efforts to protect children and prosecute dangerous offenders in federal court. The expertise of the investigators and

prosecutors in the Southern District of Indiana has been turned with regularity against offenders who record or photograph their sexual abuse and exploitation of children, even where such recordings don't make their way to the Internet. The cultivation of trust and strong ties with local law enforcement partners - who are normally the first line of defense in these kinds of non-Internet crimes - has resulted in numerous offenders being subjected to significant federal sentences, leading to safer communities and protecting children around the Southern District of Indiana.

II. Leading the way in the training of Indiana and national PSC partners, and raising public awareness

SDIN PSC is one of the national leaders in training on investigation, prosecution techniques, and community awareness. In the last year, SDIN PSC has provided 23 trainings around Indiana, speaking to law enforcement officers, school personnel, community leaders and members of the general public. Multiple members of the SDIN PSC have also, in the last year, spoken at the pre-eminent national conferences relating to combating child exploitation in Dallas, Texas, and San Jose, California, and have also spoken at various conferences around the nation. In the past year, more than 1000 individuals have been trained by the SDIN PSC, with thousands more preceding them in prior years.

III. Prosecuting the worst-of-the-worst, and keeping children safer

Ultimately, the primary day-to-day mission for the SDIN PSC is the prosecution of those who exploit children. The SDIN PSC is incredibly effective at the prosecution of high impact offenders. Since 1991, the SDIN PSC has maintained a 100% conviction rate, while aggressively pursuing the goal of prosecuting the most sophisticated and dangerous offenders.

Two primary statistics demonstrate the success in identifying and prosecuting the worst-of-the-worst offenders. First, and most importantly, is the number of children "rescued;" that is, children who were being sexually abused, and the arrest and prosecution of the offender by the SDIN PSC cut off that abuse. During the time period between March 2010 and the end of February 2011, active matters handled by the SDIN PSC involved the rescue of more than 20 Hoosier children, and more than a dozen more around the nation.

A second measure of whether the SDIN PSC met its goal of seeking out the worst of the worst is to examine the sentence received by the offender. From March 2010 through the end of February 2011, 19 offenders received sentences in excess of 15 years, including sentences for producers of child pornography/child molesters of 370 years, 235 years, and 38 years. Sentences issued by the United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana on PSC cases are consistently among the highest in the nation.

IV. National impact and recognition

The success of the SDIN PSC has led to national impact and recognition. The PSC Coordinator for the Southern District of Indiana, Assistant United States Attorney Steve DeBrotta, is consulted on and screens all national operations, and is frequently contacted for speaking engagements around the country. Leaders within the Department of Justice have been briefed on PSC operations that are being coordinated and executed by the SDIN PSC, and AUSA DeBrotta was recently recognized with The Assistant Attorney General's Award for Distinguished Service for his work on Operation Nest Egg, a prosecution conducted with CEOS of more than 30 individuals participating in a child pornography group.

V. Meeting the call and continuing to lead the way

The Attorney General of the United States Eric Holder recently reaffirmed that protecting the nation's children was one of the top priorities of the Department of Justice. Attorney General Holder directed that the mission of Project Safe Childhood should be expanded to include non-Internet related federal child sexual exploitation crimes, and that all Project Safe Childhood efforts should be effectively coordinated with CEOS. Project Safe Childhood will now include, in addition to the Internet-related crimes already under its purview, federal child exploitation crimes such as domestic prostitution of children, travel for sex with children, among other crimes against children.

The SDIN PSC is well prepared to meet this wider mission. As noted above, the SDIN PSC has frequently used its expertise and existing strong ties with CEOS and law enforcement partners to prosecute dangerous offenders against children, including where there was no tie to the Internet. The SDIN PSC team also includes prosecutors with significant experience in aggressively pursuing justice against every kind of criminal offense against children. The SDIN PSC will continue to be at the national forefront of this important Department of Justice initiative.

V. Conclusion

The SDIN PSC is continuing its mission to serve the citizens of the Southern District of Indiana. The protection of children remains among the highest callings in law enforcement and prosecution, and the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Indiana takes this calling seriously. As noted by Nelson Mandela, "[t]here can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children," and the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Indiana will continue to strive to see that Hoosier children grow up in a safer, more just society.

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